

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 307458

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, XF, US, CH

SUBJECT: BRIEFING OF ACTING PRCLO CHIEF ON MIDDLE EAST

1. SUMMARY: IN DISCUSSION WITH ACTING CHIEF OF PRCLO  
AMBASSADOR HAN, INR DIRECTOR SAUNDERS OUTLINED U.S. VIEW  
OF M.E. EVENTS. SAUNDERS STATED THAT IN EYES OF BOTH  
EGYPT AND ISRAEL, DRAMATIC CHANGE HAD OCCURRED AS RESULT  
OF SADAT VISIT TO JERUSALEM. SADAT HAD CLEARLY DEMON-  
STRATED THAT EGYPT WAS PREPARED FOR PEACE, AND HE NOW  
AWAITED RESPONSE FROM BEGIN ON TERRITORIAL AND PALES-  
TINIAN ISSUES. BEGIN DISCUSSED HIS TENTATIVE IDEAS ON  
THESE QUESTIONS DURING HIS VISIT TO U.S., AND MADE CLEAR  
THAT HIS OWN POSITION IS NOT FINAL BUT SUBJECT TO DIS-  
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CUSSION AND CHANGE. WE NOW AWAIT RESULTS FROM DEC.  
25 MEETING BETWEEN SADAT AND BEGIN. SAUNDERS STATED  
THAT EGYPT WANTS COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT, NOT  
ONLY EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI AGREEMENT, AND EMPHASIZED THAT  
U.S. ALSO SEEKS COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. WE HOPE

THAT ENOUGH MOVEMENT CAN OCCUR IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI  
DISCUSSIONS SO THAT SYRIA CAN BE DRAWN INTO NEGOTIATIONS.  
KEY ISSUES WHICH NEED TO BE RESOLVED ARE WEST BANK/  
GAZA AND THE PALESTINIANS. HAN EXPRESSED INTEREST

IN TIMING OF RESUMED GENEVA CONFERENCE (SAUNDERS SAID IT SEEMED UNLIKELY BEFORE LATE JANUARY AT THE EARLIEST, BUT LATER SEEMED MORE REALISTIC AND IN ANY CASE, NO ONE COULD TELL UNTIL AFTER THE BEGIN-SADAT MEETING,) AND IN FACT THAT SOVIETS REMAIN ON SIDELINES. HE ALSO NOTED CONSTANT PRC POSITION AS ONE OF SUPPORT FOR ARAB UNITY AND PALESTINIANS, AND VIGILANCE AGAINST SOVIET PLOTS, INTERNATIONALLY AND IN M.E. END SUMMARY.

2. AT EA'S REQUEST, INR DIRECTOR SAUNDERS MET WITH ACTING HEAD OF PRCLO HAN HSU DECEMBER 21 FOR DISCUSSION OF M.E. SAUNDERS STARTED BY NOTING THAT SECRETARY HAD ASKED HIM TO PROVIDE HAN WITH BRIEFING OF SEC.'S M.E. VISIT AND SUBSEQUENT EVENTS. FIRST IMPORTANT IMPRESSION WHICH SEC. HAD GAINED FROM HIS TRIP WAS FACT THAT SADAT VISIT TO JERUSALEM HAD HAD MAJOR EFFECT ON ATTITUDES OF BOTH EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELIS, FROM LEVEL OF PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT DOWN TO MAN IN STREET. ISRAELIS AT ALL LEVELS BELIEVE NOW THAT SADAT WANTS TO MAKE PEACE WITH ISRAEL. IN TERMS OF U.S. POLICY, THE VISIT HAS TAKEN MID-EAST PARTIES OVER A DIFFICULT HURDLE IN ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS. SADAT HAS OVERCOME ISRAELI DOUBTS ABOUT ARAB WILLINGNESS TO MAKE PEACE, AND  
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THEY NOW BELIEVE THAT AT LEAST ONE ARAB LEADER IS WILLING NOT ONLY TO END THE STATE OF WAR, BUT ALSO ESTABLISH A NORMAL RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. AT THE SAME TIME, SEC. FOUND VERY BROAD SUPPORT IN EGYPT FOR WHAT SADAT HAD DONE. A DRAMATIC CHANGE HAD TAKEN PLACE: FOR EXAMPLE, DURING SEC.'S MEETING WITH SADAT IN ALEXANDRIA, ISRAELI CORRESPONDENTS' PRESENCE WAS ACCEPTED ROUTINELY BY EGYPTIANS. ISRAELIS ALSO HAD OPPORTUNITY TO ROAM THROUGH CAIRO AND WITNESS IMPACT OF SADAT'S VISIT AS A DRAMATIC EVENT TO EGYPTIANS ON ALL LEVELS.

3. SAUNDERS CONTINUED THAT, IN TERMS OF SUBSTANCE OF THE NEW EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI RELATIONSHIP, SADAT FEELS THAT IN GOING TO JERUSALEM HE MADE A MAJOR STEP. EARLIER THIS YEAR, THREE ISSUES DEFINED CORE OF ARAB-ISRAELI PROBLEM: THE NATURE OF PEACE; THE ISSUE OF WITHDRAWAL AND SECURE BORDERS; AND THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION. SADAT HAS GIVEN ISRAEL FULL ANSWER TO THE FIRST ISSUE. HE IS NOW WAITING FOR ISRAEL TO RESPOND ON LATTER TWO. SAUNDERS SAID THAT SADAT MADE CLEAR TO SEC. THAT HIS

OBJECTIVE IS NOT ONLY SETTLEMENT BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, BUT A SETTLEMENT ON ALL FRONTS--LEBANON, SYRIA, JORDAN, AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. HE HOPED THAT ISRAEL WOULD PROVIDE A RESPONSE OF A COMPREHENSIVE NATURE. WHEN SADAT AND BEGIN MEET IN EGYPT DECEMBER 25, SADAT WILL

LOOK TO BEGIN TO PROVIDE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS.

4. DURING SECY'S VISIT THERE HAD BEEN SOME UNCERTAINTY AS TO HOW SPECIFICALLY ISRAEL HAD BEGUN TO THINK ABOUT THE NATURE OF ITS RESPONSE. SAUNDERS SAID U.S. HAD BEEN PLEASANTLY SURPRISED TO FIND THAT ISRAELIS WERE INVOLVED IN DETAILED THINKING ABOUT THE KIND OF REPLY THEY COULD GIVE EGYPT.

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5. BEGIN CAME TO U.S. WITH TENTATIVE IDEAS ABOUT HOW TO RESPOND TO SADAT. HE DID NOT ASK U.S. TO APPROVE, BUT WANTED TO OUTLINE HIS THINKING TO U.S. WE GAVE HIM OUR BEST ESTIMATE AS TO HOW SADAT WOULD REACT TO HIS PROPOSALS. SAUNDERS NOTED THAT BEGIN'S IDEAS ARE NOT FIRM. HE WILL NOT BE PRESENTING TO SADAT A FINAL ISRAELI NEGOTIATING POSITION, BUT WILL BE OFFERING SADAT PROPOSALS SUBJECT TO CHANGE. THE DEC. 25 MEETING WILL BE AN OPEN-MINDED EXCHANGE. SAUNDERS SAID THAT DURING HIS UNITED STATES VISIT, BEGIN TALKED ABOUT A SETTLEMENT ON THE EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI FRONT AND ALSO ONE INVOLVING THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, AS WELL AS A PALESTINIAN SETTLEMENT. THE U.S. WAS NOT COMPLETELY SATISFIED WITH BEGIN'S PROPOSALS, BUT BEGIN HAS COME A LONG WAY AND WE WERE QUITE PLEASED ABOUT HIS OPEN-MINDEDNESS. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO BEGIN WOULD HAVE ASKED TO KEEP ALL OF WEST BANK AND WOULD NOT HAVE TALKED ABOUT SELF-RULE.

6. REGARDING THE SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS, SADAT INITIATIVE HAS CLEARLY DISTURBED ASAD. ASAD HAS DEEP CONVICTIONS ABOUT APPROPRIATE WAY FOR ARABS TO DEAL WITH ISRAEL: THAT ARABS MUST PRESENT A UNITED POSITION TO ISRAEL. ONLY IN THIS MANNER WILL ISRAEL BE PERSUADED TO CEDE TERRITORY. ASAD BELIEVES THAT SADAT HAS, BY BREAKING RANKS, WEAKENED THE ARAB POSITION; HE IS ALSO ANGRY ABOUT SADAT NOT CONSULTING THE OTHER ARABS BEFORE TAKING THE INITIATIVE. FINALLY, HE BELIEVES THAT SADAT'S INITIATIVE WILL NOT WORK. ASAD IS NOT BEING POLEMICAL

BUT TRULY BELIEVES SADAT HAS MADE A MISTAKE. SAUNDERS NOTED THAT U.S. HAD EMPHASIZED TO ASAD THE CHANGES IN  
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ISRAELI THINKING AND OUR JUDGMENT THAT ISRAEL WOULD CHANGE ITS POSITION TOWARD A SETTLEMENT. ASAD WAS SKEPTICAL. NEVERTHELESS, HE MADE POINT THAT, DESPITE HIS STRONG DIFFERENCE OF VIEW WITH THE U.S., HE WOULD NOT LET THIS AFFECT THE U.S.-SYRIAN RELATIONSHIP.

7. SAUNDERS CONTINUED THAT EVERYONE IN THE M.E. REMAINS COMMITTED TO A TOTAL SETTLEMENT. NO ONE IS ARGUING FOR A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT. ASAD FEARS THAT SADAT WILL MAKE A SEPARATE AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL, BUT SADAT WILL INSIST ON A GENERAL AGREEMENT WITH ISRAEL ON PRINCIPLES OF A COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT. IN HIS VIEW, THE SYRIANS WOULD, AT SOME POINT, HAVE TO MAKE THE SAME OFFER OF PEACE THAT HE MADE IN GOING TO JERUSALEM AND REJOIN THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FUTURE. SADAT BELIEVES HE CAN DRAW FROM ISRAEL SUCH A SETTLEMENT OF GENERAL PRINCIPLES, BUT EACH PARTY WILL HAVE TO NEGOTIATE ITS OWN AGREEMENT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED BY THESE PRINCIPLES.

8. REGARDING GENEVA CONFERENCE, SAUNDERS NOTED THAT NO ONE IN M.E. IS AGAINST GOING TO GENEVA CONFERENCE AT THE APPROPRIATE TIME. FOR HIS PART, SADAT BELIEVES THAT THE CAIRO MEETINGS ARE USEFUL TO PREPARE FOR CONFERENCE, AND WE BELIEVE THAT SOME PREPARATION NEEDS TO BE DONE. THE MEETINGS GOING ON IN CAIRO WILL BE HELPFUL TO THIS END. EVEN THE SYRIANS HAVE KEPT THE DOOR OPEN TO ENTERING THE NEGOTIATIONS IN THE FUTURE, BUT THEY WILL NOT GO TO CAIRO OR FOLLOW SADAT'S LEAD.

9. SAUNDERS SAID THAT NEITHER JORDAN NOR SAUDI ARABIA WAS PREPARED TO SUPPORT SADAT PUBLICLY, BUT THEY DO SUPPORT HIM PRIVATELY. BOTH FEEL STRONGLY THAT ISRAEL MUST RESPOND POSITIVELY TO THE SADAT INITIATIVE, AND ARE WORRIED THAT ISRAEL MAY NOT DO SO.

10. SAUNDERS SAID WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE SOVIETS:  
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UNDER SECRETARY HABIB HAD BEEN IN MOSCOW EARLIER THIS MONTH, AND HAD TALKED WITH GROMYKO AND OTHERS; SEC. HAD ALSO DISCUSSED M.E. WITH AMBASSADOR DOBRYNIN AFTER HIS RETURN. WE HAVE KEPT SOVIETS GENERALLY INFORMED OF DEVELOPMENTS AND HAVE TOLD THEM WE ARE PREPARED TO SEE A RENEWED GENEVA CONFERENCE AT SOME POINT. WE AND THE 5&V--

SOVIETS DISAGREE ABOUT THE WAY MATTERS ARE PROCEEDING ALTHOUGH WE AGREE THAT EVENTS NOW TAKING PLACE HAVE TO BE BROUGHT INTO THE FRAMEWORK OF A FULL NEGOTIATION INVOLVING ALL ISSUES AT A LATER POINT.

11. IN RESPONSE TO AMBASSADOR HAN'S QUESTION ABOUT FUTURE PROSPECTS, SAUNDERS REPLIED THAT THEY HAVE IMPROVED, BUT MANY QUESTIONS REMAIN TO BE RESOLVED. THE EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI ASPECT OF A M.E. SETTLEMENT WAS ONE OF THE MOST SIMPLE, INVOLVING A LARGE LAND AREA IN SINAI, WHICH POSED NO IMMEDIATE THREAT TO ISRAEL. HE ADDED THAT PROSPECTS FOR A RESOLUTION OF THE EGYPTIAN-

ISRAELI ASPECT WERE QUITE GOOD; HOWEVER, THE WEST BANK AND GAZA PROBLEM, INVOLVING THE PALESTINIANS, IS PROBABLY THE MOST DIFFICULT. EVEN IF ALL PARTIES APPROACHED THIS PROBLEM WITH THE BEST OF INTENTIONS, ITS COMPLEXITY WOULD REQUIRE TIME TO WORK OUT ALL ISSUES. IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA, THE ISSUES OF SECURE BORDERS IS COMPLICATED BY QUESTION OF HOW AREA WOULD BE GOVERNED. THIS MIGHT TAKE TIME TO WORK OUT, SINCE THE PALESTINIANS HAVE NOT HAD OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP THEIR OWN FORM OF GOVERNMENT, NOR HAVE THEY DEVELOPED A VIEW ON HOW THESE TERRITORIES SHOULD BE ADMINISTERED. SAUNDERS ADDED THAT THE PROPOSALS BEGIN BROUGHT TO WASHINGTON REPRESENTED A SIGNIFICANT FIRST STEP, BUT  
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THEY DO NOT GO FAR ENOUGH AND WILL HAVE TO BE DISCUSSED ON DEC. 25 BETWEEN BEGIN AND SADAT. MOREOVER, THE JORDANIANS WILL HAVE TO BE INVOLVED AT SOME POINT AND, LATER, THE QUESTION OF THOSE PALESTINIANS LIVING OUTSIDE OF WEST BANK/GAZA AREA. IN SUM, THE PROSPECTS FOR A SETTLEMENT HAVE IMPROVED BUT PROBLEMS REMAIN: PERHAPS ALL THAT WE CAN REALISTICALLY EXPECT AT THIS POINT IS NOT FINAL PEACE ARRANGEMENTS FOR WEST BANK/GAZA, BUT SIMPLY HOW TO MANAGE AREA FOR A TRANSITIONAL PERIOD OF 3 TO 4 YEARS. THIS WOULD PERMIT PALESTINIANS TIME TO WORK OUT THEIR OWN FORM OF GOVERNMENT, THEN FINAL AGREEMENT CAN BE ESTABLISHED.

12. SAUNDERS CONTINUED THAT U.S. HAS NOT MADE PROGRESS ON SYRIAN FRONT. SYRIANS HAVE NOT AGREED TO THE PRESENT FORMAT FOR NEGOTIATIONS--CAIRO OR GENEVA--BUT WE HOPE THAT ISRAEL WILL SHOW MOVEMENT SUFFICIENT SO THAT SYRIANS WILL EVENTUALLY DECIDE TO RE-ENTER NEGOTIATIONS. WE NEED THE SYRIANS INVOLVED AND WILL STAY IN TOUCH WITH THEM.

13. ON THE LEBANESE SIDE, SAUNDERS EXPLAINED THAT IT SHOULD NOT BE DIFFICULT TO NEGOTIATE PEACE BETWEEN LEBANON AND ISRAEL BY THEMSELVES. LEBANON HAS DEEP INTEREST IN SETTLEMENT BECAUSE IT IS ONLY THROUGH SETTLEMENT THAT THEY BELIEVE IT IS POSSIBLE TO END THEIR OWN INTERNAL STRIFE AND SETTLE THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE. THE LEBANESE ARE MORE THAN OBSERVERS TO THE PROCESS; ONCE THE NEGOTIATIONS GET GOING, THE FORMAL PROBLEM INVOLVING THE LEBANESE FRONT CAN BE SOLVED. THERE IS NO BORDER PROBLEM.

14. AMBASSADOR HAN ASKED IF THERE WAS A REAL POSSIBILITY OF RESUMING GENEVA CONFERENCE. SAUNDERS SAID SEVERAL THINGS HAD TO HAPPEN FIRST: IF AN UNDERSTANDING IS REACHED AT THE CAIRO MEETINGS, THEY WILL BE ELEVATED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL, AND THAT WOULD PERMIT  
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FOREIGN MINISTERS TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS OF NEGOTIATIONS AT GENEVA. AN OPTIMISTIC PROJECTION WOULD BE THAT THERE MIGHT BE A GENEVA CONFERENCE AT THE END OF JANUARY OR BEGINNING OF FEBRUARY. A LESS OPTIMISTIC, AND PROBABLY MORE REALISTIC VIEW IS THAT THE CAIRO MEETINGS WILL NOT QUICKLY PRODUCE AGREEMENT, THAT BEGIN WILL REQUIRE FURTHER TIME FOR CONSULTATION, THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE FURTHER MEETINGS, AND THAT A DATE FOR A RESUMED GENEVA CONFERENCE WOULD BE LATER.

15. AMBASSADOR HAN NOTED THAT SO FAR THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN ON THE SIDELINES AND WONDERED IF THAT WOULD CONTINUE. SAUNDERS EXPLAINED THAT SOVIETS VERY MUCH WANT TO BE INVOLVED IN NEGOTIATIONS, BUT HAVE NOT SUPPORTED SADAT'S INITIATIVE. SINCE THE NEXT PHASE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS IS IN CAIRO, THEY WILL APPARENTLY CONTINUE ON THE SIDELINES. SAUNDERS NOTED THAT SOVIETS WANT TO SEE GENEVA CONFERENCE RECONVENED AND CONTINUE TO PRESS U.S. TO MOVE NEGOTIATIONS IN THAT DIRECTION. THE U.S. BELIEVES THAT GENEVA WILL HAVE TO RESUME AT SOME APPROPRIATE TIME, AND WE ARE PREPARED TO GO. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT SOVIETS WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO PLAY THE SAME ROLE AS U.S., WHICH HAS CONFIDENCE OF BOTH SIDES. THE SOVIETS, SAUNDERS CONTINUED, HAVE CHOSEN TO STEP ASIDE, HAVE SUPPORTED REJECTION CONFERENCE IN TRIPOLI, AND HAVE PUT THEMSELVES IN OPPOSITION TO PARTIES WHICH DEMONSTRABLY WANT PEACE.

16. AMBASSADOR HAS THANKED SAUNDERS FOR BRIEFING. HE STATED THAT PRC'S CONSTANT POSITION TOWARD M.E. WAS ONE OF ALWAYS SUPPORTING JUST CAUSE OF PALESTINIAN AND ARAB PEOPLES, FOR THE RECOVERY OF TERRITORY AND RESTORATION OF NATIONAL RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS. HOWEVER, WHEN SEC. HAD

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VISITED PRC, HE WAS TOLD THAT PRC WELCOMED U.S. PREVAILING OVER SOVIET UNION. VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING HAD TOLD SEC. THAT AS LONG AS U.S. PUT A CHECK ON ISRAEL, U.S. WOULD MAINTAIN ITS SUPERIORITY IN M.E.

17. HAN ADDED THAT THE PRC ALSO SUPPORTS THE UNITY OF THE ARABS AND PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND IS ON THE ALERT TO PRESS THE ARAB CAUSE. HE SAID THAT AT THE SAME TIME IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BE VIGILANT ABOUT THE DESIGNS OF THE SOVIET UNION.

18. SAUNDERS REPLIED THE U.S. SUPPORTS ARAB UNITY BUT CANNOT DO MUCH ABOUT THOSE ARABS WHO REJECT THE PEACE

PROCESS. WE DO NOT WISH TO SEE THE ARABS DIVIDED. EVEN WHEN SADAT AND ASAD ARE IN DISAGREEMENT, THE U.S. HAS BEEN CAREFUL TO MAINTAIN CONTACT WITH BOTH. U.S. PROBLEM IS WITH THE ARABS WHO REFUSE TO MAKE PEACE AT ALL, SUCH AS IRAQ AND LIBYA. IT SHOULD BE CLEAR, HOWEVER, THAT U.S. SUPPORTS THE PRINCIPLE OF ARAB UNITY AND WILL DO NOTHING TO DIVIDE THE ARAB PEOPLE.

19. AMBASSADOR HAN CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT ALL SHOULD BE VIGILANT ABOUT SOVIET PLOTS AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD AND AGAINST THE ARABS. PRC TAKES A SUPPORTIVE POSITION OF ALL MOVES BY SADAT AND THE EGYPTIAN PEOPLE AGAINST SOVIET HEGEMONY, SUCH AS SADAT'S MOVE TO CLOSE THE CULTURAL CENTERS OF THE SOVIET UNION AND OTHER EASTERN EUROPE COUNTRIES. THE PRC'S POSITION, HE SAID, HAS ALWAYS BEEN CONSTANT.  
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